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TOHAK116

TO: JON HOWE FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

DELIVER IN SEALED ENVELOPE FOR JON HOWE

FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT

FOLLOWING ARE HYLAND'S COMMENTS ON BREZHNEV LETTER:

OVERALL IMPRESSION OF BREZHNEV'S LETTER IS THAT HE IS PREPARED TO PICK UP RELATIONS AT THE POINT THEY WERE INTERRUPTED BEFORE THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, BUT THAT INITIATIVE SHOULD NOW COME FROM THE US. THUS BREZHNEV AGREES WITH EVERY POINT IN THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER, BUT WITHOUT ADVANCING ANYTHING BEYOND PROFORMA STATEMENTS OF HIS POSITION. HIS HANDLING OF ALL THE ISSUES IS SOMEWHAT QUARREL SOME, AND HE SEEMS BENT ON SCORING MINOR DEBATING POINTS IN HIS DISCUSSION. INDEED, THERE IS A PETULANT TONE TO THE LETTER; MUCH OF IT MAY BE FOR THE RECORD, FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE LEADERSHIP.

ON THE MIDDLE EAST, BREZHNEV APPARENTLY WANTS TO MAKE SURE THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO ACTIVE SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, AS WELL AS IN A FINAL GUARANTEE. HE REMINDS THE PRESIDENT OF HIS PREVIOUS WARNINGS THAT AREA COULD EXPLODE WITH "EVEN GREATER COMPLICATIONS". ALSO, HE IS AT PAINS TO REBUT OUR EXPOSITION OF THE US-SOVIET PRINCIPLES BY IMPLYING THAT IN CALLING AN ALERT WE VIOLATED THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE PRINCIPLES AS WELL AS ARTICLE IV ON CONSULTATION IN PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR AGREEMENT.

HIS TREATMENT OF CSCE AND MBFR IS STANDARD, WITH REMINDERS

\*\*\*\*\* \*WHSR COMMENT\*\*\*\*\*

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ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS  
APPLY

DOS Review Completed.

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THAT YOU AGREED WITH GROMYKO ON HOW TO PROCEED IN CSCE BY TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE NON INTERFERENCE ISSUE. (NOTE: WE ARE STARTING TO MOVE IN GENEVA ON THIS.) ON MBFR, HE SUGGESTS FURTHER PRIVATE EXCHANGES BUT ADDS THE STANDARD CAVEAT THAT THERE CAN BE NO CHANGES IN THE EXISTING SITUATION TO THE DETRIMENT OF ANY PARTY (I.E., NO UNEQUAL REDUCTIONS).

NOTHING NEW IS PRESENTED ON SALT; THEY ARE PROCEEDING WITH THEIR REVIEW, BUT HE CLAIMS THAT YOU OWE THEM A PROPOSAL.

THE SHARPEST BARBS ARE RESERVED FOR MFN. BREZHNEV SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT MFN MAY BE LINKED TO FUTURE SOVIET PERFORMANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHICH OF COURSE HE REJECTS. YET, THERE IS SOME CONCILIATORY LANGUAGE INDICATING THAT HE APPRECIATES AND UNDERSTANDS OUR TACTICS IN HANDLING MFN WITH THE CONGRESS.

THERE IS A HIGHLY UNUSUAL AND INTERESTING PERSONAL NOTE. BREZHNEV CONVEYS HIS WISHES TO THE PRESIDENT FOR ENERGY AND SUCCESS IN OVERCOMING COMPLEXITIES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND AT A DISTANCE. HE NOTES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS BECAUSE OF THEIR INTEREST IN IMPROVING SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS. IN EFFECT, BREZHNEV IS SAYING THAT SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS DEPEND ON THE PRESIDENT PERSONALLY, AND THIS ENTIRE PASSAGE SEEMS DESIGNED TO REBUT RECENT SPECULATION THAT SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF WATERGATE INDICATES A

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REASSESSMENT OF SOVIET POLICY.

THE CLOSING NOTE IS THAT BREZHNEV IS DETERMINED TO PROCEED WITH A "DECISIVE" IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS. THIS SEEMS TO BE THE OPERATIVE POINT OF THE MESSAGE AND THE BURDEN WHICH BREZHNEV IS TRYING TO CONVEY. THUS, THE MESSAGE IS INTENDED AS A NOTE OF REASSURANCE, THOUGH COUCHED IN SOMEWHAT POLEMICAL TONES. BREZHNEV PROBABLY FEELS THAT HE PERSONALLY, AS WELL AS HIS POLICIES, HAVE BECOME VULNERABLE IN

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THE WAKE OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND THAT HE IS CONSTRAINED FROM MAKING ANY NEW MOVES ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. AT THE SAME TIME BREZHNEV WANTS TO ENCOURAGE US TO CONTINUE IN VARIOUS NEGOTIATIONS, AND TO KEEP A DIALOGUE GOING. HE SEEMS TO BE SAYING THAT YOU AND DOBRYNIN SHOULD NOW BEGIN PICKING UP THE PIECES ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

WARM REGARDS.

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